

The opinion in support of the decision being entered today  
is not binding precedent of the Board.

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

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BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS  
AND INTERFERENCES

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*Ex parte* GARY H. KNAUF

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Appeal No. 2007-0419  
Application No. 09/978,524  
Technology Center 1700

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Decided: March 29, 2007

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**MAILED**

**MAR 29 2007**

**PAT. & T.M. OFFICE  
BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS  
AND INTERFERENCES**

Before: SPIEGEL, LANE and NAGUMO, *Administrative Patent Judges*.

SPIEGEL, *Administrative Patent Judge*.

**DECISION ON APPEAL**

1           This is a decision on appeal under 35 U.S.C. § 134 from the Examiner's  
2   final rejection of claims 1-12. Claims 13-21 are also pending, but are withdrawn  
3   from consideration as being directed to a non-elected invention. We have  
4   jurisdiction under 35 U.S.C. § 6(b). We affirm-in-part, reverse-in-part and add a  
5   new ground of rejection.

6   **I.     Introduction**

7           Claim 1 is illustrative of the subject matter on appeal and reads as follows:

1                   A method for extrusion coating a lightweight  
2                   web comprising:

3                   feeding a length of a lightweight web along with  
4                   a length of carrier web to an extruder with the  
5                   lightweight web atop the carrier web;

6                   extruding a polymer film coating onto the  
7                   lightweight web and carrier web in the extruder so that  
8                   a surface of the lightweight web is coated by the  
9                   extruded coating to provide an extrusion-coated  
10                  lightweight web; and

11                  separating the extrusion-coated lightweight  
12                  web from the carrier web.

13           The dependent claims further limit the lightweight web, carrier web and  
14           polymer film coating recited in the method of claim 1. Specifically, the lightweight  
15           web is limited to a web which deforms when subjected to a tension of about 0.5  
16           pli or less (claim 3) or has an MD curl of less than about 3 inches as measured  
17           by TAPPI UM 427 (claim 8) or has insufficient strength to withstand forces  
18           imposed upon it by an extruder coating station in the absence of the underlying  
19           carrier web (claim 9). The lightweight web may be a nonwoven fabric (claim 5), a  
20           paper web (claim 6) or a metal foil (claim 7). The carrier web may be a  
21           heavyweight web (claim 10) or a second lightweight web (claim 11). The  
22           polymer film coating may comprise a coextrusion of at least two layers of polymer  
23           film (claim 12) or may be made of certain types of polymers (claim 4).

24           In reaching our decision, we have given careful consideration to the  
25           Appellant's specification and claims and to the respective positions articulated by  
26           the Appellant and the Examiner. We make reference to the Examiner's Answer  
27           ("Answer," mailed 26 July 2006) for the Examiner's reasoning in support of the

1 rejections and to Appellant's Appeal Brief ("Brief," filed 05 June 2006) for the  
2 Appellant's arguments thereagainst.

3 The Examiner relies on the following references in her rejections:

4	Backwell	3,620,872	16 November 1971
5	Peterson	3,840,421	08 October 1974
6	Anderson	4,963,303	16 October 1990
7	Marrocco, III et al. (Marrocco)	5,646,231	08 July 1997
8	Enlow et al. (Enlow)	6,254,712	03 July 2001

9 **II. Issues**

10 Claims 1, 3, 4 and 6-11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as  
11 unpatentable over Backwell in view of Marrocco. Claim 5 stands rejected under  
12 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Backwell in view of Marrocco as applied to claim 1 and  
13 further in view of Anderson. Claim 12 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)  
14 over Backwell in view of Marrocco as applied to claim 1 and further in view of  
15 Enlow.

16 Claims 1-4 and 8-11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as  
17 unpatentable over Peterson in view of Backwell, further in view of Marrocco.

18 **III. Discussion**

19 **A. Rejections based on Backwell and Marrocco**

20 **1. claims 1, 3-4 and 6-11**

21 Appellant has not argued that claims 4 and 9-11 are separately patentable  
22 from claim 1 upon which they depend. Therefore, the patentability of claims 4  
23 and 9-11 rise or fall with the patentability of claim 1.

24 Backwell discloses a method of processing a web material supported on a  
25 carrier and subsequently separating the processed web and carrier to obviate

1 extensibility and heat distortion of the web material (col. 1, ll. 6-27). The carrier  
2 may be a web of polyester film, a paper-foil laminate, synthetic rubber, stainless  
3 steel (col. 1, ll. 28-40). A coating of non-self-supporting polymeric material, e.g.,  
4 vinylidene chloride copolymers, polyolefins, wax/copolymer blends and cellulosic  
5 derivatives, is applied to the carrier, e.g., by melt extrusion, aqueous dispersion  
6 coating, solvent-based lacquering or hot melt coating (col. 1, ll. 47-52). The  
7 polymeric coating is subsequently processed to add a print layer, an adhesive  
8 layer and one or more supporting layers of web-forming materials, thereby  
9 producing a self-supporting assembly (col. 1, ll. 54-58). The supporting layers  
10 may be applied by extrusion coating (col. 1, ll. 54-58; col. 2, ll. 10-11 and 45-46)  
11 and may be made of polymers, e.g., polyethylene, polypropylene, ethylene-vinyl  
12 acetate copolymer or vinylidene chloride copolymers, or may be paper or metal  
13 foil (col. 1, ll. 59-65; col. 2, ll. 10-11 and 45-46). The coated assembly is then  
14 separated from the carrier (col. 1, ll. 13-27).

15       The Examiner only relies on Marrocco for its disclosure that art recognized  
16 coating techniques include "coating from solution, spray coating of solution, spin  
17 coating, coating from a latex, powder coating, laminating preformed films, spray  
18 coating molten droplets, and coating from the melt" (col. 21, ll. 5-9).

19       According to the Examiner, the claimed lightweight web reads on either  
20 the non-self-supporting polymeric material layer or the laminated non-self-  
21 supporting polymeric material and adhesion layers of Backwell. The Examiner  
22 maintains that the limitations of claim 1 are met by the carrier web moving either  
23 the non-self-supporting polymeric material layer or the laminated layers to the

1 extruder ("feeding a length of a lightweight web along with a length of carrier web  
2 to an extruder with the lightweight web atop the carrier web") where a supporting  
3 layer made of polymeric material is extrusion coated thereon to produce a self-  
4 supporting assembly ("extruding a polymer film coating onto the lightweight web  
5 and carrier web in the extruder so that a surface of the lightweight web is coated  
6 by the extruded coating to provide an extrusion-coated lightweight web") which is  
7 then separated from the carrier web ("separating the extrusion-coated lightweight  
8 web from the carrier web"). [Answer, ¶ bridging pp. 4-5.]

9 Appellant does not dispute that Backwell teaches the coating of  
10 lightweight webs. Rather, Appellant argues that claim 1 requires the lightweight  
11 web to be formed separately from the carrier web. [Brief, p. 4, ¶ 2.]

12 When examining claims for patentability, claims are interpreted as broadly  
13 as is reasonable and consistent with the specification. In re Hyatt, 211 F.3d  
14 1367, 1372, 54 USPQ2d 1664, 1667 (Fed. Cir. 2000). Here, the plain language  
15 of claim 1 does not require that the lightweight web exist independently of the  
16 carrier web at the beginning of the method. Claim 1 simply requires that "a  
17 lightweight web along with a ... carrier web" be fed into an extruder. The claimed  
18 methods are open as to how the lightweight web comes to be on top of the  
19 carrier web and the "comprising" language of the claimed methods does not  
20 exclude the presence of additional steps or layers. We find that the Examiner  
21 has shown that Backwell describes a method of coating lightweight webs  
22 meeting all the limitations of claim 1. Thus, the broad language of claim 1 is  
23 anticipated by Backwell. Since anticipation is the epitome of obviousness (In re

1 Fracalossi, 681 F.2d 792, 794, 215 USPQ 569, 571 (CCPA 1982)), we sustain  
2 the Examiner's rejection of claim 1, as well as of claims 4 and 9-11, under §  
3 103(a) over Backwell in view of Marrocco. Moreover, since claim 1 is anticipated  
4 by Backwell, the Examiner's reliance on Marrocco is harmless. Accordingly, it is  
5 unnecessary to consider the Examiner's argument that Marrocco teaches "that  
6 laminating preformed films is functionally equivalent to coating from melt, solution  
7 or latex" (Answer, p. 5, ¶ 2).

8        Claims 3 and 8 limit the lightweight web treated in the method of claim 1 to  
9 a web which deforms when subjected to a tension of about 0.5 pli or less (claim  
10 3) or has an MD curl of less than about 3 inches as measured by TAPPI UM 427  
11 (claim 8). The specification broadly defines "lightweight" webs, in relevant part,  
12 as "webs which ... have insufficient strength to allow them to be effectively  
13 extrusion coated using existing ... known extrusion systems and methods or  
14 which ... have not heretofore been deemed suitable to be extrusion coated." For  
15 example, according to the specification, webs which deform when subjected to  
16 tensions of about 0.5 pli or less are generally considered "lightweight," while  
17 "[w]ebs which may be subjected to tensions of over about 0.5 pli without  
18 exhibiting undesirable deformations can generally be extrusion coated using  
19 known systems and methods." [Specification ¶¶ bridging pp. 4-5.] Further  
20 according to the specification, failed attempts to extrusion laminate lightweight  
21 webs in the prior art "have resulted in the substrate being highly distorted if not  
22 destroyed and having measured curls far in excess of 3 inches" (p. 6, ¶ 4). In  
23 other words, webs which exhibit deformations when subjected to tensions of

1 about 0.5 pli or less or which have an MD curl of less than about 3 inches as  
2 required by claims 3 and 8, respectively, have been generally considered as not  
3 being amenable to extrusion coating using known extrusion systems because the  
4 webs cannot withstand the forces applied to them in these systems.

5 The Examiner argues that since Backwell shows how to treat any type of  
6 lightweight web without breakage or deformation, the burden has shifted to  
7 Appellant to show that lightweight webs having the specifically recited property  
8 could not be treated using the Backwell method (Answer, p. 5, ¶ 4; p. 10, ¶ 4).  
9 Essentially, the Examiner contends that the limitations recited in claims 3 and 8  
10 are inherent in the definition of a lightweight web. Indeed, Backwell discloses  
11 methods for coating webs that cannot support themselves. In particular,  
12 Backwell discloses "applying to the said carrier a coating of polymeric material,  
13 the coating in itself being nonself-supporting but capable of subsequent  
14 separation from said carrier when the coating has become part of a self-  
15 supporting assembly . . ." (col. 1, ll. 17-20, emphasis added). The Backwell webs  
16 that are "nonself-supporting" appear to meet all the criteria set out by Appellant  
17 for lightweight webs as recited in claims 3 and 8. The burden is on Appellant to  
18 prove otherwise. In re Spada, 911 F.2d 705, 15 USPQ2d 1655 (Fed. Cir. 1990);  
19 In re Fitzgerald, 619 F.2d 67, 205 USPQ 594 (CCPA 1980); In re Best, 562  
20 F.2d 1252, 195 USPQ 430 (CCPA 1977). Since the Examiner did not cite the  
21 aforementioned passage in Backwell or explain how the disclosure in Backwell  
22 related to the definition of lightweight web in Appellant's specification, we

1 denominate our affirmance of the Examiner's rejection of claims 3 and 8 as  
2 unpatentable under § 103(a) as a new ground of rejection.

3        Claims 6 and 7 require the lightweight web used in the method of claim 1  
4 to be either a paper web or a metal foil, respectively. Instead of the extrusion  
5 coated polymeric supporting layer of Backwell corresponding to the recited  
6 extrusion coated polymer film, the Examiner changes her position and equates  
7 Backwell's supporting layer to the recited lightweight web because Backwell  
8 alternatively discloses that the supporting layer may be made of paper or metal  
9 foil (Answer, p. 10, ¶ 2). For such a process, the Examiner has not pointed to  
10 any evidence or explained why the Backwell paper or foil supporting layers are  
11 "lightweight webs" as Appellant uses that term. Therefore, we reverse the  
12 rejection of claims 6 and 7 under § 103(a) over Backwell in view of Marrocco.

13        **2.     claim 5**

14        Acknowledging that neither Backwell nor Marrocco teach or suggest that  
15 the lightweight web used in the method of claim 1 is a nonwoven fabric, the  
16 Examiner looks to Anderson to satisfy this deficiency (Answer, p. 7, ¶ 8 - p. 9,  
17 ¶ 2). Anderson is directed to polyimide ultrafiltration membranes useful for the  
18 recovery of dewaxing aids used in solvent dewaxing processes (col. 1, ll. 7-23).  
19 Anderson describes casting porous membranes on various backing (support)  
20 materials, in particular, a non-woven fabric backing for certain uses of the  
21 membrane (col. 3, ll. 56-64). Specifically, using the membrane in high  
22 temperature ultrafiltration processes requires the use of a temperature resistant  
23 backing layer, e.g., Nomex,® a non-woven felt material (col. 3, ll. 59-64).

1 According to the Examiner, it would have been obvious "to have used a non-  
2 woven fabric backing as other material to which it is desired to apply a coated  
3 finish in Backwell in view of Marrocco, III et al since Anderson teaches that metal  
4 plate or moving non-woven fabric backing can be used as a suitable backing for  
5 applying a casting solution in certain applications" (Answer, sentence bridging  
6 pp. 7-8). However, the Examiner has not explained why one of ordinary skill in  
7 the art would have treated a high temperature resistant support backing, e.g., the  
8 non-woven fabric described in Anderson, using a method designed to obviate  
9 heat distortion of the support layer as instantly claimed. It is improper to use  
10 hindsight reconstruction to pick and choose among isolated disclosures in the  
11 prior art to deprecate the claimed invention. In re Fine, 837 F.2d 1071, 1075, 5  
12 USPQ2d 1596, 1600 (Fed. Cir. 1988). Therefore, we reverse the rejection of  
13 claim 5 under § 103(a) over Backwell in view of Marrocco as applied to claim 1  
14 above and further in view of Anderson.

15 **3. claim 12**

16 Acknowledging that neither Backwell nor Marrocco teach applying the  
17 polymer film coating as a coextrusion of at least two layers of polymer film, the  
18 Examiner looks to Enlow to satisfy the deficiency (Answer, p. 8, ¶¶ 4-6). Enlow  
19 discloses that when producing protective and decorative films comprising a clear  
20 coat, a color coat and a size coat, these layers can be extruded in series or  
21 coextruded as a multi-layer film onto the carrier (col. 14, ll. 1-7). Appellant does  
22 not dispute that coextrusion of films is known (Brief, p. 11, ¶ 3). Rather,  
23 Appellant argues that "the prior art does not teach or suggest the ability to apply

1 an extrusion coating to a lightweight web that is separable from a carrier web on  
2 which it resides" (*id.*). Backwell discloses applying an extrusion coating to a web  
3 that is separable from a carrier web as explained above. Failure to consider the  
4 references together is inappropriate in view of the fact that the rejection was  
5 made under § 103. Cable Elec. Prods. Inc. v. Genmark, Inc., 770 F.2d 1015,  
6 1025, 226 USPQ 881, 886-87 (Fed. Cir. 1985); In re Keller, 642 F.2d 413, 425,  
7 208 USPQ 871, 881 (CCPA 1981). Therefore, Appellant's argument is not  
8 persuasive. Consequently, we will sustain the Examiner's rejection of claim 12  
9 under § 103(a) over Backwell in view of Marrocco as applied to claim 1 above  
10 and further in view of Enlow.

11 **B. Rejection of claims 1-4 and 8-11 based on Peterson, Backwell**  
12 **and Marrocco**  
13

14 Peterson discloses a method of printing and/or embossing a continuous  
15 web of stretchable thermoplastic material ("lightweight web") (col. 1, ll. 49-52)  
16 comprising feeding a relatively non-stretchable carrier belt, e.g., stainless steel  
17 ("carrier web") (col. 3, ll. 10-11), through a first work station where adhesive is  
18 applied to the belt (col. 3, ll. 25-34) and then through a second work station  
19 where a web of stretchable material, e.g., vinyl, is pressed into contact with the  
20 adhesive to firmly adhere the web to the belt (col. 3, ll. 50-60). Preferably, the  
21 web has a width less than the width of the belt (col. 3, ll. 61-62). The adhered  
22 web is carried to various processing stations for printing (col. 4, ll. 3-28). After  
23 print processing, a sheet of protective clear vinyl material ("polymer film coating")  
24 can be applied to the surface of the web (col. 4, ll. 53-61) and the completed web

1 passes through a stripping station where it is separated from the carrier belt (col.  
2 5, ll. 23-28).

3 Backwell and Marrocco have been discussed above.

4 According to the Examiner, Peterson differs from claim 1 in failing to  
5 disclose applying the protective clear vinyl material by extrusion coating (Answer,  
6 p. 6, ¶ 4). The Examiner relies on Marrocco as teaching that coatings may be  
7 formed by laminating preformed films or by extrusion onto substrates and  
8 Backwell as teaching that a coating of vinyl material maybe formed on a printed  
9 vinyl material by extrusion (Answer, p. 6, ¶¶ 5 and 7). The Examiner concludes  
10 that it would have been obvious to apply the protective clear vinyl material layer  
11 of Peterson by extrusion coating instead of by laminating a preformed sheet in  
12 view of Marrocco's disclosure that coatings may be formed by laminating  
13 preformed films or by extrusion onto substrates and, as necessary, further in  
14 view of Backwell's disclosure of applying a coating of vinyl material onto a printed  
15 vinyl material by extrusion (Answer, p. 6, ¶¶ 6 and 8). As to claims 3-4 and 8-11,  
16 the Examiner reiterates her arguments above based on the disclosures of  
17 Backwell and Marrocco without Peterson.

18 On the one hand, Appellant contends that adding Peterson to the above  
19 obviousness rejection of claims 1, 3-4 and 8-11 over Backwell and Marrocco is  
20 unnecessary and duplicative (Brief, p. 7, ¶ 3). However, we view the rejection  
21 based on Peterson as an essentially independent rejection from that based on  
22 Backwell insofar as the Examiner's rationale, which we found to be tantamount to  
23 anticipation, is based on an entirely different logic than the obviousness of

1 substituting one method of coating (extruding) for another (lamination). On the  
2 other hand, Appellant contends that the addition of Peterson to the previous  
3 rejection does not rectify the alleged deficiencies of Backwell and Peterson. The  
4 Examiner responds that Peterson adds a teaching of coating width which  
5 Backwell and Marrocco lack (Answer, p. 11, ¶ 1). However, coating width  
6 limitations are only recited in claim 2.

7 We will sustain the rejection of claims 1, 3-4 and 8-11 under § 103(a) over  
8 Peterson, Backwell and Marrocco because the ordinary worker would have  
9 substituted the known method of applying a protective coating by extrusion,  
10 taught by Backwell, for the lamination coating method exemplified by Peterson.  
11 We find that Peterson's stretchable thermoplastic material also appears to meet  
12 inherently the additional limitations of claims 3 and 4 and we again designate our  
13 affirmation of the rejection of claims 3 and 8 as a new ground of rejection. As to  
14 claim 2, the Examiner acknowledges that Peterson fails to disclose the width of  
15 the protective clear vinyl material as being greater than the width of the  
16 lightweight web (Answer, p. 7, ¶ 1). However, the Examiner concludes that it  
17 would have been obvious to use a protective clear vinyl material having a width  
18 greater than the width of the lightweight web with the expectation of "protecting"  
19 the edges of the web (*id.*, p. 7, ¶¶ 2-3). Appellant responds that "this proffered  
20 justification is not the reason for Appellant overlapping the coating onto the  
21 carrier web and has no basis" (Brief, p. 10, ¶ 3).

22 "Obviousness is not to be determined on the basis of purpose alone." *In*  
23 *re Graf*, 343 F.2d 774, 777, 145 USPQ 197, 199 (CCPA 1965). However, when

1 relying on multiple references or a modification of the prior art, it is incumbent on  
2 the Examiner to identify some suggestion to combine references or make the  
3 modification. In re Jones, 958 F.2d 347, 351, 21 USPQ2d 1941, 1943 (Fed. Cir.  
4 1992) (stating that there must be some suggestion to combine, "either in the  
5 references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary  
6 skill in the art"). Here, the Examiner has provided a reason for the modification,  
7 which we find sensible and which Appellant has not materially challenged, to  
8 modify the prior art, i.e., to protect the edges of the lightweight web. The fact that  
9 the Examiner's reason is not the same as Appellant's is insufficient to rebut the  
10 prima facie conclusion of obviousness presented by the Examiner. In re Dillon,  
11 919 F.2d 688, 693-94, 16 USPQ2d 1897, 1901-02 (Fed. Cir. 1990). Therefore,  
12 we will sustain the rejection of claim 2 under § 103(a) over Peterson, Backwell  
13 and Marrocco.

#### 14 **IV. Conclusion**

15 To summarize, the rejection of claims 1, 2, 4 and 9-12 under 35 U.S.C. §  
16 103(a) is AFFIRMED; the rejection of claims 3 and 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) is  
17 AFFIRMED ON NEW GROUNDS; and, the rejection of claims 5-7 under 35  
18 U.S.C. § 103(a) is REVERSED.

19 37 CFR § 41.50(b) (2004) provides "[a] new ground of rejection pursuant  
20 to this paragraph shall not be considered final for judicial review." 37 CFR §  
21 41.50(b) also provides that the appellant, WITHIN TWO MONTHS FROM THE  
22 DATE OF THE DECISION, must exercise one of the following two options with

1 respect to the new ground of rejection to avoid termination of the appeal as to the  
2 rejected claims:

3 (1) *Reopen prosecution*. Submit an appropriate  
4 amendment of the claims so rejected or new evidence  
5 relating to the claims so rejected, or both, and have  
6 the matter reconsidered by the examiner, in which  
7 event the proceeding will be remanded to the  
8 examiner. . . .

9 (2) *Request rehearing*. Request that the proceeding  
10 be reheard under § 41.52 by the Board upon the  
11 same record. . . .

12 No time period for taking any subsequent action in connection with this  
13 appeal may be extended under 37 CFR § 1.136(a).

AFFIRMED-IN-PART; REVERSED-IN-PART; NEW GROUNDS OF REJECTION

<u>/Carol A. Spiegel/</u>	)	
Carol A. Spiegel	)	
Administrative Patent Judge	)	
	)	
<u>/Sally G. Lane/</u>	)	BOARD OF PATENT
Sally G. Lane	)	APPEALS AND
Administrative Patent Judge	)	INTERFERENCES
	)	
<u>/Mark Nagumo/</u>	)	
Mark Nagumo	)	
Administrative Patent Judge	)	

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